

memorandum

February 16, 1999

TO: All Federal Caucus Members

FROM: William Stelle, Jr., Northwest Regional Director,
National Marine Fisheries Service

Judith A. Johansen, Administrator and Chief Executive Officer,
Bonneville Power Administration

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Anne Badgley, Regional Director,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Steve Clark, Acting Regional Director, PN Region,
Bureau of Reclamation

SUBJECT: Federal Caucus Workplan and Deadlines

On behalf of the Regional Executives, we would like to thank the members of the Federal Caucus for helping us get ready for the “1999 Decision.” It is critical that we continue to work together on these challenging issues over the next year. To provide some guideposts for the Caucus in the months ahead, we thought it would be useful to clarify the scope of the decision, the role of the Caucus, and the workplan and products leading up to the decision.

Scope of the 1999 Decision: The 1999 decision is not simply about breaching dams or barging fish at the four Lower Snake dams. The 1999 decision will be a new consultation for the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) that will cover multiple species (salmon, steelhead, bull trout, sturgeon, snails). The consultation will address both FCRPS operations and configuration and off-site mitigation for hydropower impacts funded by the action agencies (Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bonneville Power Administration) and covered by the consultation. The goal is to develop a proposed action that will meet Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements as well as addressing applicable provisions of other Federal laws such as the Northwest Power Act (NWPAct) and Clean Water Act (CWA).

The Caucus will develop alternative proposals for FCRPS operations and configuration, as well as alternative actions in the other sectors affecting listed anadromous fish and habitat, harvest and hatcheries. The Caucus will combine actions in all of the sectors into comprehensive multi-species plans in the form of a “green paper.” The green paper will be akin to a recovery plan framework. It will have the scope but not the detail of a recovery plan.

Role and Structure of the Caucus: Caucus members will be the organizers and managers for all of the products and actions leading up to the 1999 Decision. As a result, we hope that all of you can make this a full-time commitment.

The Caucus will oversee and manage the following subcommittees covering all of the 4Hs (habitat, hydro, harvest and hatcheries) and will integrate the options/plans/actions in a comprehensive plan:

The Legal Committee: This Committee will provide the Caucus with advice on legal issues, procedures, and requirements. This includes requirements that may be applicable under ESA, NWPA, CWA, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Legal Committee is already up and running with Duane Mecham as coordinator.

The Communications and Outreach Committee: This committee will oversee outreach in the form of shuttle diplomacy, public involvement strategies, integration of the various public processes, and coordination with other forums such as the Multi-Species Framework. It will also work on common messages and talking points. The Communications Committee is already up and running, with Carolyn Whitney as chair.

The Hydro Alternatives Committee: This Committee will develop and analyze options for hydro operations, including dam modifications, fish passage, reservoir operations, and flow augmentation. The Committee will explore alternatives informally with states, tribes, and river interests. The chair of the Hydro Alternatives Committee will be Witt Anderson.

The Harvest and Hatchery Alternatives Committee: This Committee will develop and analyze options for hatchery operations, including establishment of guidelines and modifications to existing programs. It will also develop and analyze options for harvest management, including rebuilding schedules, harvest buy-out/lease-outs, and selective fisheries. The Committee will explore alternatives informally with states, tribes, and river interests. This Committee will also coordinate closely with Federal representatives negotiating the extension of the Columbia River Fish Management Plan. The chair of the Harvest and Hatchery Alternatives Committee will be Jean Edwards.

The Habitat Alternatives Committee: This Committee will develop and analyze options for habitat protection and restoration, including measures of success, land and water management, experimental programs, incentives, and acquisition programs. The Committee will explore alternatives informally with states, tribes, and river interests. The chair of the Habitat Alternatives Committee will be Elizabeth Gaar.

The Clean Water Act Alternatives Committee: This Committee will be a temporary one, developing and analyzing options for system-wide measures to address water quality standards for temperature and gas supersaturation. After Committee drafts are completed in February or March, this Committee may be disbanded or combined with the other 4H Committees. The chair of the Clean Water Act Alternatives Committee will be Phil Millam.

Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. If the other Committees have not adequately addressed research, monitoring, and evaluation, the Caucus will form this Committee and select a chair in the spring.

Each Committee chair should plan on attending Caucus meetings to report on progress between meetings. Each Committee Chair is personally responsible for ensuring that Committee products are out on time, according to the Workplan.

Preliminary Workplan: At this point, we expect to need the following documents:

A Communications and Outreach/Public Involvement Plan. **Draft Plan due February 15.**

Evaluations of alternatives from each of the Committees. **First drafts due March 18. Revised drafts based on input due April 15. This includes the following steps:**

- Review existing Federal and regional plans;
- Develop a broad set of options for the particular “H”;
- Identify those options, which are included in current regional and Federal plans;
- Identify those options that would apply under each of three strategies and priority on stocks most at risk, priority on stocks with greatest potential for recovery, and priority on actions that benefit most stocks;
- Identify those options which are now being implemented; and
- Talk with people.

A Green Paper on the 4Hs. **First Draft due May 27.**

A working draft of the Biological Assessment (BA) for Federal Caucus discussion purposes. **First draft due June 10.**

Relationship to the Framework and Forum: We would like to try to clarify some of the questions we have heard about the relationship between these two decision processes.

The Multi-Species Framework Process is up and running. The Framework project will provide analysis of comprehensive multi-species recovery plans that are being discussed and developed in the region. The Framework includes representatives from a broad range of affected interests in the region including governments and interests groups. To build trust and working relationships within the region, the activities of the Caucus members and the Committees should be coordinated with and, where possible, build on the activities and products of the Framework. Where possible, the Caucus and Framework will integrate public processes to avoid perceived duplication, increase efficient use of the region’s resources, and help foster a common understanding of the issues. If the Framework and related processes remain on schedule, their products should be factored into the 1999 Decision process. If the Framework schedule slips, the Framework members can nevertheless be used as a sounding board for Federal alternatives.

The Columbia River Basin Forum (Forum) is intended to serve as the intergovernmental coordination body for fish and wildlife issues “ensuring coordination among Federal, State and Tribal parties in planning and implementing existing and future processes.” It’s stated purpose:

“to provide a high level policy forum in which Federal, State and Tribal governments, working with interested members of the public, will address, collaborate on and coordinate basin-level policy, planning, decision-making and implementation issues and processes that affect the Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife and related habitat.”
(MOA Section II.A)

Recently, several Federal departments and agencies, three State governments and 11 Tribal governments signed the Forum Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). We expect that the Forum Committee established under the MOA will soon begin functioning. Over the next few weeks, the Federal regional directors, with the assistance of the Federal Caucus, will discuss among themselves and with their respective headquarters how the Federal agencies could interact with the Forum on the issues being managed by the Federal Caucus.

We look forward to working with all of you. Thanks in advance for all your hard work.